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## Table of Contents

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N Staff and Incident Command System (ICS) Roles & Responsibilities .....	2
Why Jopes? .....	7
Why N Staff? .....	10
Why ICS? .....	11
ICS-JOPES Crisis Action Planning Comparison.....	12

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# N Staff and Incident Command System (ICS) Roles & Responsibilities

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**Purpose** To review and discuss similarities, and differences, in the N Staff and ICS organizations.

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**Background** The Coast Guard is a multi-mission organization that, at times, needs to respond to crisis in one of two fashions:

- ◆ N Staff (for national emergencies, or when working jointly with Department of Defense components)
- ◆ Incident Command System (ICS)(when working almost any other type of contingency, in particular, when working jointly with civilian agencies)

While most Coast Guard personnel receive adequate training in their potential ICS roles, there is little like training for their N Staff roles and responsibilities. Adding to this situation is that individuals who work in a specific section under ICS, may not work under the same type of section under the N Staff organization.

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**Simple Organization** The Incident Command System (ICS) organization is built around five major functions that are required at each incident. N Staff, also has five major functions. A basic comparison of the two organizations follows.

N Staff	Incident Command System
N-1: Personnel	Command Staff
N-2: Intelligence	Finance/Administration
N-3: Operations	Logistics
N-4: Logistics	Operations
N-5: Planning	Planning
N-6: Communications	

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## N Staff and Incident Command System (ICS) Roles & Responsibilities, Continued

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**ICS to N Staff**     The following table is provided to show where ICS units would fall under a strict N Staff organization.

<b>N Staff</b>	<b>ICS (ICS position)</b>
N-1: Personnel	Safety Officer (Command Staff) Liaison Officer (Command Staff) Resources Unit (Planning Section) Documentation Unit (Planning Section) Time Unit (Finance/Administration) Finance Section Chief (Finance Section)
N-2: Intelligence	Information Officer (Command Staff)
N-3: Operations	Operations Section Chief (Operations Section) Everything currently under Operations
N-4: Logistics	Logistics Section Chief (Logistics Section) Demobilization Unit (Planning Section) Medical Unit (Service Branch - Logistics) Supply Unit (Support Branch - Logistics) Facilities Unit (Support Branch - Logistics) Ground Support Unit (Support Branch - Logistics) Procurement Unit (Finance/Administration Section) Compensation/Claims (Finance/Administration Section) Cost Unit (Finance/Administration Section)
N-5: Planning	Planning Section Chief (Planning Section) Situation Unit (Planning Section)
N-6: Communications	Communications Unit (Service Branch - Logistics)

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# N Staff and Incident Command System (ICS) Roles & Responsibilities, Continued

**Organizational Comparison** The table below outlines the roles and responsibilities of the N Staff, with the proposed Incident Command System structure equivalents.

N Staff	N Staff Responsibilities	Proposed ICS Position Equivalents
N-1: Manpower & Personnel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ All matters concerning human resources and,               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Unit Personnel strength and readiness status</li> <li>◆ Monitors and assesses elements of personnel administration &amp; management</li> <li>◆ Receives information for coordinating, advising, and planning to assist the CG Commander in accomplishing the mission</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>Safety Officer:</b> Develops &amp; recommends measures for assuring personnel safety.</p> <p><b>Liaison Officer:</b> Where incidents are multi-jurisdictional, or have several agencies, individual is contact for personnel assigned to incident by these agencies.</p> <p><b>Resources Unit:</b> Maintains status of all assigned resources at an incident (key supervisory personnel, primary &amp; support resources, etc.).</p> <p><b>Documentation Unit:</b> Maintains accurate, up-to-date incident files.</p> <p><b>Time Unit:</b> Accurate recording of daily personnel time, compliance with time recording policies, and managing commissary operations.</p> <p><b>Finance Section Chief:</b> Manage all financial aspects of incident, provide financial &amp; cost analysis information, develop operating plan for Finance/Administration, meet with assisting and cooperating agency reps., help with financial input for demobilization planning.</p>
N-2: Intelligence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ All matters concerning military and contingency intelligence.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Acquires various intelligence information and data.</li> <li>◆ Analyzes and evaluates intelligence and data.</li> <li>◆ Provides analyzed information and data to CG Commander with recommendations.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>Situation Unit:</b> Collects, processes, and organizes all of the incident information.</p>
N-3: Operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ All matters concerning contingency operations, tactical plans, tactical response organization and training               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Maintains current operations estimate of situation in coordination with other staff elements</li> <li>◆ Coordinates &amp; develops the operations &amp; tactical plans, and OPORDERS</li> <li>◆ Responsible for all tactical activities</li> <li>◆ All personnel and unit training within Command organization</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>Operations Section Chief:</b> Manages tactical operations, requests resources as needed, supervises execution of the Incident Action Plan for Operations, approves release of resources from assigned status.</p> <p><b>Other Branches, Task Forces, Single Resources, Staging Area Manager, Air Operations, Air Tactical Group, etc.</b> Assigned duties, as directed under the standard ICS organization.</p>

# N Staff and Incident Command System (ICS) Roles & Responsibilities, Continued

## Organizational Comparison (continued)

N Staff	N Staff Responsibilities	Proposed ICS Position Equivalents
N-4: Logistics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ All matters concerning the response organization supplies, maintenance, transportation, and services               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ Determines supply requirements and coordinates/processes supply requests.</li> <li>♦ Ensures supply security.</li> <li>♦ Supervises collection, staging, distribution and transportation of supplies</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>Logistics Section Chief:</b> All incident support (exception being aviation support).</p> <p><b>Demobilization Unit:</b> Develops Incident demobilization plan.</p> <p><b>Medical Unit:</b> Procedures for managing major medical emergencies, provide medical aid, and assist with processing injury-related claims (determine level of emergency medical activities prior to activation, acquire and manage medical support, establish procedures for handling serious injuries).</p> <p><b>Food Unit:</b> Supplies food needs for the entire incident (determine food &amp; water requirements, obtain necessary equipment and supplies, order sufficient food and potable water, etc.).</p> <p><b>Supply Unit:</b> Orders, receives, processes, stores all incident-related resources. Provides supplies to planning, logistics and finance/admin sections, determines type and amount of supplies en route, orders, receives, distributes, and stores supplies and equipment, maintains inventory of supplies and equipment</p> <p><b>Facilities Unit:</b> Sets up, maintains and demobilizes all incident support facilities. Determines requirements for each incident facility, activates incident facilities, provides security services, etc.</p> <p><b>Ground Support Unit:</b> Maintenance, service, and fueling of all mobile equipment &amp; vehicles. Ground transportation of personnel, supplies and equipment. Support services for mobile equipment &amp; vehicles, order maintenance &amp; repair supplies, etc.</p> <p><b>Procurement Unit:</b> All matters pertaining to vendor contracts, leases, and fiscal agreements. Coordinate with local jurisdiction on plans and supply sources, draft memoranda of understanding, establish contracts &amp; agreements with supply vendors.</p>

# N Staff and Incident Command System (ICS) Roles & Responsibilities, Continued

## Organizational Comparison (continued)

N Staff	N Staff Responsibilities	Proposed ICS Position Equivalent
N-4: Logistics (Cont'd)		<p><b>Compensation/Claims:</b> Oversees completion of all forms required by workers' compensation and local agencies. Also maintains file of injuries and illnesses, associated with the incident. Close coordination with the Medical Unit. Claims is responsible for investigating all claims involving property associated with or involved in incident.</p> <p><b>Cost Unit:</b> Provides all incident cost analysis. Insures proper identification of all equipment and personnel requiring payment, prepares estimates of incident costs, and maintains accurate records of incident costs.</p>
N-5: Plans & Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ All matters concerning the long range response organization planning. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Prepares mission, concept, and overall operations plans for the contingency.</li> <li>◆ Prepares the recommended Course of Action (COA) and Commander's Estimates (CE), and provides response recommendations.</li> <li>◆ Coordinates and facilitates all planning functions and processes.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>Planning Section Chief:</b> Evaluates, processes, and disseminates information for use at the incident. Reassigns out-of-service personnel already on-site to ICS organizational positions, as appropriate, establishes information requirements, and reporting schedules, determines need for any specialized resources, assembles information on alternative strategies, provides periodic predictions on incident potential, reports any significant changes in incident status.</p>
N-6: Command, Control & Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ All matters concerning Command, Control, and Communications. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Handles command responsibilities for communications.</li> <li>◆ Coordinates tactical communications planning and execution.</li> <li>◆ Manages and develops the electronics and automatic information systems.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>Communications Unit:</b> Develops plans for the use of incident communications equipment and facilities, installs and tests the communications equipment, supervises the Incident Communications Center, distributes and maintains communications equipment.</p>
Special Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Gives technical, administrative &amp; tactical advice</li> <li>◆ Prepares parts of plans, estimates &amp; orders</li> <li>◆ Coordinates &amp; supervises staff activities</li> </ul>	
Personal Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Responsible directly to the Commander</li> <li>◆ Special Matters over which commander chooses to exercise close personal control</li> <li>◆ Usually includes the political adviser</li> </ul>	

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## Why Jopes?

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**Joint Planning** The U. S. Coast Guard, as one of the five armed services, is obligated to plan and, when requested, participate in joint operations with any or all of the other armed services. Joint operation planning includes the preparation of operations plans (OPLANS), OPLANS in concept format (CONPLANS), functional plans, campaign plans, and operation orders. One of the advantages of joint planning is that it comprises a sequential process that is performed simultaneously at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels of armed conflict, and can be applied to other situations as well.

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**Strategic Direction** Joint planning is crucial in both national security strategy and national military strategy. Both are shaped by and oriented on national security policies, providing strategic direction for combatant commanders. Generally speaking, joint planning, aids joint forces in conducting campaigns and major operations, with the goal being to increase the total effectiveness of the joint force. All of this is geared towards achieving the stated strategic direction.

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**Background** Joint operations planning, under the *Joint Operation Planning and Execution System (JOPES)* is a **systematic** way of planning an exercise or actual operations. It integrates various processes that entail **similar policies** and **procedures** that apply to both war and military operations other than war (MOOTW). The system offers both **jointness** and **standardization** in problem solving and decision making.

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**When to use?** JOPES can be used for any type of operation, as it offers uniformity in policies, procedures, and reporting structures. Although it is essential to use it in joint operations, such as war, it will most likely also be used in military operations other than war (MOOTW), especially in a joint operation.

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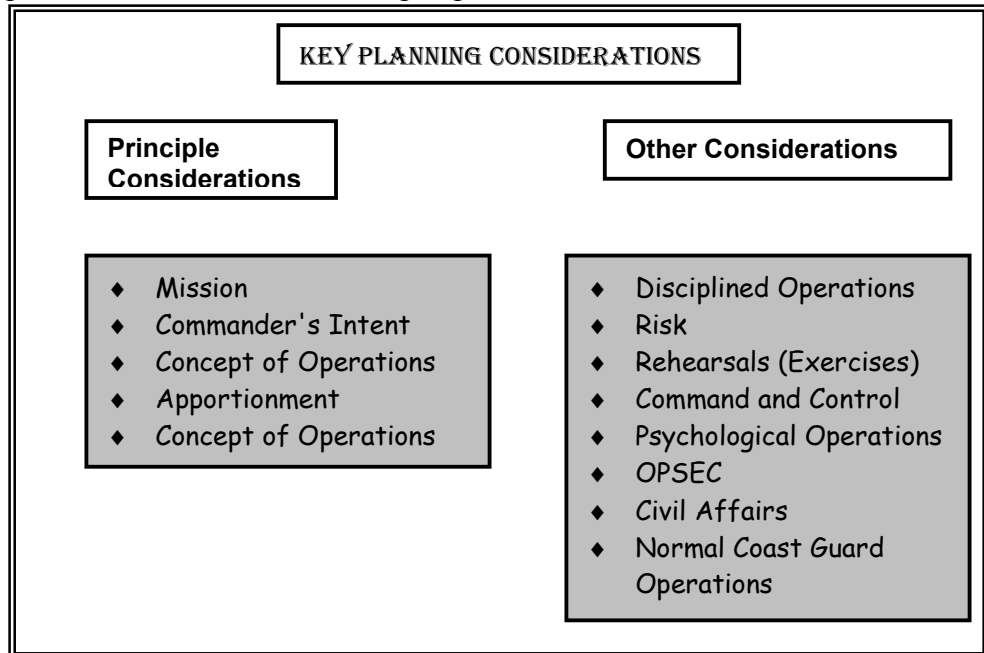
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## Why Jopes?, Continued

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### Planning Considerations

The following table shows what needs to be considered when planning joint operations, from a Coast Guard perspective.



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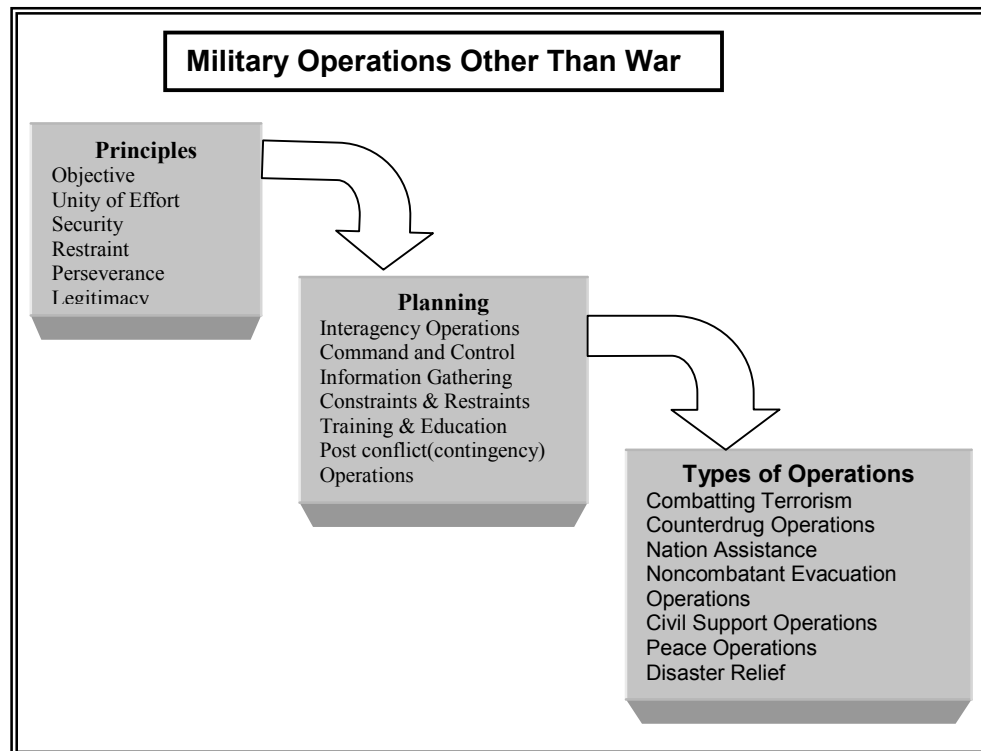
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## Why Jopes?, Continued

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### **Military Operations Other than War (MOOTW)**

While there is a remote possibility that Coast Guard forces may find themselves in a theatre of war (there are some recognized situations where this might occur), it is more plausible that they will find themselves in supporting U. S. civil authorities. While many of these operations will be under the auspices of ICS types of organizations, the following table indicates the type of planning, or thought processes that needs to be done for MOOTW.



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### **JOPES Summation**

Simply stated, JOPES is a unique mechanism, a tool, by which the members of the U. S. Armed Forces can speak to one another. It's standard format, containing like information, is critical when the armed services are working together, in joint operations. Together, with the "N" staff, which supports it, it provides the five Armed services a mechanism that helps in "orderly and coordinated problem solving and decision making."

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## Why N Staff?

<b>Background</b>	The N Staff is a derivative of the Joint Staff, or J Staff. The Joint Staff is organized on the convention staff model, and dates back to the organization adopted by General Pershing, from the French, in World War I. After the war, the Army and the Marine Corps massaged the French Model into what became the U. S. Join Staff.
<b>Terminology</b>	Even as the Armed Forces strive for jointness in plans and operations, there are significant differences in functional terminology, especially between the non-naval branches. For our purposes, since we work directly with the Navy, we normally follow the "N" staff designations, noted earlier in this paper.
<b>Advantage of N Staff</b>	The N Staff, or Joint Staff, organization, allows two or more of the Armed Services staffs to speak a common language on common ground. Although called different names (at least the and Air Force), there is still consistency in the functional subdivisions of the staffs, into personnel, intelligence, operations, logistics, and planning. If the Coast Guard is tasked with participating in a joint effort, with the Navy, we would fall under the "N" Staff organization, and everyone would know where
<b>Disadvantage of N Staff</b>	<p>The major disadvantage of the N Staff system is that it is very broad in scope, and it makes certain assumptions. Where ICS narrows down the individual's responsibilities, N Staff does not. And, N Staff assumes that individuals come to the table with certain skills and knowledge.</p> <p>Another problem, at least in the Coast Guard, is that a majority of our personnel are trained either in ICS, or have ICS type experience, which is micro in nature. When thrust into an N Staff role, they are put into a macro type world where the uninitiated can become quickly lost.</p>
<b>Comment</b>	G-OPF-3 needs to work with the Contingency Preparedness School, at TRACEN Yorktown, to create comprehensive training in the N Staff methodology. This training, needs to be done in coordination with ICS type training, so that both systems are familiar to all personnel.

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## Why ICS?

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<b>Background</b>	On 24 August 1998, Commandant signed Commandant Instruction 3120.14, which formally adopted the National Interagency Incident Management System (NIIMS) Incident Command System (ICS) as the "standardized response management system for Coast Guard response operations."
<b>Interagency Cooperation</b>	<p>The Coast Guard works with many civilian agencies, as well as state, local and federal organizations that are familiar with ICS and use it as their response tool. In these circumstances, it is not in the best interest of the Coast Guard to use N Staff. NIIMS ICS was originally designed by a group of local, state, and federal agencies with fire protection responsibilities to improve their ability to respond to multitudes of emergencies.</p> <p>Had the Coast Guard not adopted NIIMS ICS, inefficiencies would have resulted in cases where interagency responses occurred. With the Coast Guard's adoption of NIIMS ICS, however, the situation has risen whereby two response organizations (N Staff and NIIMS ICS) now compete within the Service.</p>
<b>Advantage of ICS</b>	NIIMS ICS is used by many organizations, as well as state, local and federal agencies, all of with whom the Coast Guard interacts. The system (ICS) exudes simplicity, encourages initiative, and allows for a decentralization of tasking that spreads workloads amongst a greater number of participants. In general, everyone in the ICS organization knows what they're supposed to be doing, where they're doing it, who they report too, and when. The overall system creates a certainty, and even some economies that are not apparent under the N Staff. Other advantages include set times for meetings, specific formats for various reports, and span of control.
<b>Disadvantage of ICS</b>	At times, ICS can be very paperwork oriented. In addition, the frequency of meetings can be overwhelming. In ICS, under a unified command, several individuals/agencies may be in charge; this could actually hinder a response effort, if infighting occurs amongst the responders.

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## ICS-JOPES Crisis Action Planning Comparison

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**Crisis Response** Both ICS and JOPES use a six phased approach to Crisis Responses. A comparison of the two is below. It is interesting to note, however, that aside from semantics, the two approaches are essentially the same, with minor differences.

Phase	ICS	JOPES
1	Understanding the Situation	Situation Development
2	Establish Incident Objectives & Strategy	Crisis Assessment
3	Develop tactical direction and assignments	Course of Action (COA) Development
4	Prepare the Plan	Course of Action Selection
5	Implement the Plan	Execution Planning (approved COA)
6	Execution & Evaluation	Execution

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